The Dialectic of Peace and Divine Command: St. Augustine's Justification of Just and Holy War

The Polemical and Theological Genesis of Augustinian War Theory

The development of Christian ethical reflection on organized violence underwent a profound paradigm shift during the late fourth and early fifth centuries[1]. In the pre-Constantinian era, Christian thinkers frequently gravitated toward pacifism or expressed deep skepticism regarding the compatibility of military service with the teachings of the Gospel[1]. However, the institutional integration of the Christian Church into the Roman Empire, coupled with acute theological controversies, necessitated a robust defense of Christian participation in the state's coercive apparatus[1]. Aurelius Augustinus, the Bishop of Hippo, emerged as the pivotal architect of this intellectual transformation[2]. Rather than dedicating a single, systematic treatise to the ethics of warfare, Augustine articulated his views across a wide array of polemical, pastoral, and philosophical writings[4]. His reflections are fundamentally anchored in two monumentally distinct yet complementary works: *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* (Reply to Faustus the Manichaean), written around 400 CE, and *De Civitate Dei contra paganos* (The City of God Against the Pagans), composed over a fifteen-year period following the cataclysmic sack of Rome in 410 CE[8]. Together, these texts construct a dual justification for the use of lethal force, spanning the temporal, corrective mechanism of the Just War (*bellum iustum*) and the absolute, transcendent command of the Holy War (*bellum Deo auctore*)[10].

The immediate intellectual catalyst for Augustine's early formulation of war theory was the polemical threat of Manichaeism[2]. In *Contra Faustum*, Augustine was forced to defend the moral integrity of the Old Testament against the critiques of the Manichaean bishop, Faustus of Milevis, who rejected the genealogical tables of the Gospels and viewed the material world as an inherently corrupt battleground between the cosmic forces of Light and Darkness[8]. Faustus asserted that the God of the Hebrew Scriptures was a moral monster who commanded horrific massacres, plunder, and military conquests, rendering the Old Testament fundamentally incompatible with the peaceful teachings of Jesus Christ in the New Testament[2]. In response, Augustine developed a sophisticated hermeneutic of historicization, arguing that the moral permissibility of an action must be understood within its specific, divinely ordained historical context[15]. This polemical defense of the Hebrew patriarchs and prophets laid the conceptual foundation for his theory of divine command warfare[2].

Conversely, in *De Civitate Dei*, Augustine was confronted with pagan accusations that Christianity had undermined the civic virtue and military resolve of the Roman Empire, leading to its vulnerability before barbarian invasions[9]. Here, Augustine moved beyond textual defense to construct a comprehensive social ontology[9]. He demonstrated how temporal warfare, while always a tragic consequence of human sin, could serve as an indispensable instrument for restraining lawlessness and preserving the fragile earthly peace necessary for the Church's

historical pilgrimage[17].

The Anti-Manichaean Polemic: Contra Faustum and the Defense of Old Testament Violence

The Exegetical Challenge of Faustus of Milevis

To appreciate Augustine's exegetical strategy in *Contra Faustum*, one must understand the radical nature of the Manichaean challenge. Faustus of Milevis argued that the Old Testament was infected with "disgusting precepts" and described the patriarchs as guilty of the worst crimes and leading wicked lives[14]. For the Manichaeans, who adhered to a strict dualism wherein the material world was created by an evil principle, the physical violence of the Old Testament was proof that the Hebrew God was not the true Father of Lights but a malevolent, terrestrial deity[12]. Faustus insisted that the New Testament commanded absolute non-resistance, citing Christ's instruction to turn the other cheek as a direct repudiation of the Mosaic law of retaliation[8].

Augustine counters this by asserting that the Manichaeans failed to distinguish between the various dispensations of salvation history[20]. Drawing on the hermeneutical principles he developed in *De Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine maintains that God, as the ultimate physician of human history, prescribes different laws for different eras[20]. The apparent mutability of divine commands does not reflect an inconsistent deity, but rather a progressive divine pedagogy wherein the grace of the New Testament was veiled in the Old, and the obscurity of the Old is revealed in the New[22].

The Moral Anatomy of Combat in Book XXII

In Book XXII, chapters 74 through 79, Augustine directly addresses the morality of the military campaigns led by Moses[21]. In chapter 74, Augustine argues that the wars of Moses do not excite surprise or abhorrence when understood as acts of pure obedience to the command of God[14]. Moses did not exhibit personal ferocity, cruelty, or a bloodthirsty desire for conquest; rather, he showed obedience to a sovereign Creator who knows the appropriate measure of suffering and action required for every person and nation[14].

Augustine defines the true culpability in warfare in paragraph 74, clarifying that the mere death of mortal men—who are destined to die eventually anyway—is not the genuine evil of war[2]. Instead, the real evils that are justly blamed in wars include the desire to do harm, revengeful cruelty, an implacable and revengeful spirit, the ferocity of rebellion, and the lust for domination[3]. These subjective, disordered passions are what make warfare sinful, and it is precisely to punish and restrain these vices when force is required that good men undertake wars in obedience to legitimate authority[3].

In chapter 75, Augustine establishes that a great deal depends on the causes for which men undertake wars and the authority they possess to do so[3]. The natural order, which seeks the peace of mankind, ordains that the monarch must have the power to initiate war if he deems it advisable, and that soldiers must perform their military duties on behalf of the peace and safety of the community[14]. When war is undertaken in obedience to God, who seeks to rebuke,

humble, or crush the pride of man, it must be recognized as an indisputably righteous war[14].

In chapter 76, Augustine addresses Christ's command of non-resistance by arguing that the Gospel requires an inward disposition of the heart (*praeparatio cordis*) rather than a outward, bodily inaction[2]. The sacred seat of virtue is the heart, and it is entirely possible to wage war outwardly while maintaining a benevolent, loving disposition inwardly, aiming solely at the correction and ultimate peace of the adversary[2].

The Structural Transition of Salvation History

In chapter 77, Augustine emphasizes that the divergence between the Old and New Testaments is not a contradiction of divine nature but a shift in the administration of divine grace[17]. To illustrate the structural transition of salvation history, Augustine contrasts the functional roles of the ministers of the two covenants in paragraph 79[13]. He writes that the service of the ministers of the Old Testament, who were heralds of the New, consisted in putting sinners to physical death[27]. Conversely, the service of the ministers of the New Testament, who are interpreters of the Old, consists in being put to death themselves[27].

This distinction does not invalidate the physical violence commanded under the Old Covenant; rather, it demonstrates that the physical executions of the Old Testament prefigured the spiritual judgments of the end times and the substitutionary atonement of Christ[27]. By framing Old Testament warfare as a typological and pedagogical necessity, Augustine succeeded in defending the unity of the biblical canon against Manichaean dualism, while simultaneously preserving a theological category for direct, divinely sanctioned violence[10].

The Metaphysical and Social Ontology of War in De Civitate Dei

The Two Cities and the Pathology of Pride

In *De Civitate Dei*, Augustine transitions from the exegetical defense of biblical history to a comprehensive, cosmic analysis of human society[5]. He argues that human history is the story of two intermingled, coexisting cities: the City of God (*civitas Dei*) and the earthly City of Man (*civitas terrena*)[5]. These cities are defined and divided not by geographical borders or ecclesiastical institutions, but by the ultimate orientation of their love[9]. The City of God is formed by the love of God to the contempt of self, while the earthly city is formed by the love of self to the contempt of God[30].

The defining psychological and structural force of the City of Man is the *libido dominandi*—the insatiable lust for domination[5]. Following the Fall, human beings, stripped of their proper relationship of dependence upon God, attempt to project their own power by forcing others into state of dependence upon them[31]. This pathological drive is the engine of human empires, most notably pagan Rome[9].

Augustine mounts a devastating critique of the Roman civilizational myth[3]. Drawing on the Roman historian Sallust, Augustine notes that Roman imperial ideology celebrated *gloria* (glory in battle), *decus* (honor), and *maiestas* (majesty) as supreme civic virtues[31]. He exposes these

concepts as deceptive masks designed to conceal a naked *libido dominandi*[3]. Augustine asserts that without true justice—which can only exist where the true God is worshipped—human empires are nothing more than "robber bands" on a grand scale (*magna latrocinia*), expanding their territories through aggressive wars of plunder and the violent subjugation of peaceful neighbors[9]. Rome, in defeating her rivals, praised her own crimes and called it glory, proving that the earthly city is fundamentally characterized by a constant, bloody struggle for self-glorification and power[31].

The Metaphysics of Peace and Order in Book XIX

Despite his bleak assessment of the City of Man, Augustine maintains that the fragile, temporal peace of the earthly city is a genuine good that must be utilized and preserved by the citizens of the City of God[18]. In Book XIX, chapters 11 through 15, Augustine develops a sophisticated metaphysics of peace and order[36]. In chapter 12, he posits that peace is the ultimate, universal desire of all created nature[36]. Even the most brutal warriors, the fiercest wild beasts, and the most lawless robber bands do not seek to destroy peace, but rather to establish a peace that conforms to their own will[36]. War, therefore, is not waged for the sake of war, but as a violent means to achieve a more secure and desirable peace[17].

In chapter 13, Augustine famously defines peace as the "tranquility of order" (*tranquillitas ordinis*), defining order as the distribution which allots things equal and unequal to their appropriate places[37]. This cosmic order is hierarchical and dependent upon God[33]. In chapter 15, Augustine explains that under the natural order established by God, human beings were created as natural equals[42]. True nature did not make man master over man, but master over irrational beasts[34].

The introduction of sin disrupted this natural equality, leading to the emergence of slavery, political subjugation, and institutional coercion as punishments for human wickedness[9]. Because the earthly city is characterized by disordered desires, the state's coercive laws and punitive actions are necessary to restrain sinful impulses and preserve a minimal, temporal peace (*pax terrena*)[35]. For this reason, the citizens of the City of God must obey the laws of the temporal state and support its preservation, utilizing the fragile peace of Babylon as shelter during their historical pilgrimage toward the eternal peace of the heavenly Jerusalem[18].

Tristis Necessitas and the Limits of Human Justice

The necessity of preserving temporal peace means that the righteous sovereign must occasionally declare and wage war[3]. In Book XIX, chapter 7, Augustine examines the profound tragedy of linguistic diversity and the "misery of wars, even of those called just"[44]. He argues that a just war (*bellum iustum*) is always a "sad necessity" (*tristis necessitas*) imposed upon the righteous ruler by the injustice of the opposing side[39]. The righteous sovereign does not celebrate military victory; rather, he laments the human slaughter, destruction, and moral corruption that inevitably accompany even the most justified conflicts[2].

Augustine illustrates the tragic limits of human justice through the figure of the civil judge[32]. Because the judge cannot read the secrets of the human heart, he is frequently forced by his public duty to extract confessions through torture, occasionally executing innocent men in his ignorance[26]. Yet, the judge must continue to sit in judgment to preserve society from chaos[23]. In

the same way, the sovereign must wage war to punish injustice, operating in a state of profound moral risk and ignorance, recognizing that the very need for war is a tragic indictment of the fallen human condition[2].

To provide clear moral boundaries for the taking of human life, Augustine outlines explicit exceptions to the biblical commandment "Thou shalt not kill" in Book I, chapter 21[47]. He argues that those who take human life do not commit homicide when they act under the authority of a just law (*data lege*), execute the lawful sentence of a civil magistrate, or wage war at the direct prompting of God (*Deo auctore*)[5]. In these specific instances, the human agent functions as a sword in the hand of a higher, righteous power, remaining free from personal guilt or the stain of murder[5].

The Conceptual Genesis of Holy War: Bellum Deo Auctore and Its Ecclesiastical Application

The Theory of Divine Command Warfare

While Augustine's theory of *bellum iustum* operates within the framework of natural law and temporal redress, he also introduces a distinct, highly potent justification for Holy War, termed *bellum Deo auctore*—war directly sanctioned, prompted, or commanded by God[10]. In a *bellum Deo auctore*, the standard moral prohibitions against killing and the confiscation of property are suspended by the supreme will of the Creator[9]. Augustine asserts that because God possesses absolute sovereignty over all creation, He has the authority to order the physical execution of sinners to punish their pride, test the patience of His saints, or preserve the spiritual purity of His people[2].

The human agents of a *bellum Deo auctore*—such as the Old Testament judges and kings—do not act out of private initiative or the *libido dominandi*[7]. They function as objective ministers of divine justice, executing commands that are righteous by definition because of their divine origin[2]. The moral evaluation of a holy war is asymmetrical: one side fights for light and Christ, while the other fights for darkness and the devil, making the conventional standards of bilateral human justice completely inapplicable[3].

The Donatist Controversy and the Theology of Coercion

The theoretical framework of *bellum Deo auctore* and religious violence underwent a profound practical application during Augustine's pastoral struggle against the Donatist schism in North Africa[2]. The Donatists, a perfectionist Christian sect, claimed to be the only true, pure Church because they had refused to compromise with the Roman state during the Diocletianic persecution, viewing the Catholic Church as corrupted by its communion with sinners[51].

Initially, Augustine advocated for purely verbal persuasion, dialogue, and intellectual argument, fearing that the use of state force would only produce false, hypocritical conversions[54].

However, his position shifted dramatically after the Donatist military wing, the Circumcelliones, launched a campaign of violent terror, destroying Catholic property, assaulting clergy, and causing widespread agricultural disruption[10]. Augustine came to regard the Circumcelliones as

lawless rebels who were actively waging war against the public peace and the unity of Christ's body[30].

To justify the imperial suppression of the Donatists, Augustine formulated his theology of religious coercion, principally articulated in **Letter 93** to Vincentius (408 CE) and **Letter 185** to Count Boniface (417 CE), the latter later identified in his *Retractationes* as *De correctione Donatistarum*[26]. In Letter 185, Augustine outlines the difference between Arians and Donatists and defends the imperial right to persecute schismatics[52]. He introduces the critical distinction between "just persecution" (*persecutio iusta*) and "unjust persecution" (*persecutio iniusta*)[51]. Unjust persecution is carried out by the ungodly against the Church of Christ, driven by cruelty and the desire to destroy[52]. Just persecution is carried out by the Church and Christian authorities against the ungodly, motivated by love (*caritas*), pastoral concern, and the desire to correct and recall heretics from error[51].

Augustine defends this by comparing the relationship of the Church and the Donatists to the scriptural figures of Sarah and Hagar[57]. He argues that Hagar actually persecuted Sarah through her insolence and pride far more severely than Sarah persecuted Hagar by instilling physical discipline in her[60].

Furthermore, Augustine famously appeals to the parable of the Great Feast in Luke 14:15-24, where the master commands his servants to "compel them to come in" (*cogite intrare*)[26]. He reasons that while external coercion cannot directly change a person's free will, the fear of temporal suffering and loss of property breaks through intellectual obstinacy, making heretics docile, reflective, and receptive to theological reasoning[26].

By framing imperial coercion as a form of loving discipline, Augustine established the theological precedent that physical force could be legitimately deployed to defend the doctrinal and institutional unity of the Church[3].

The Division of Moral Responsibility in Public War

To ensure that military service remains a lawful public function rather than a source of personal sin, Augustine insists upon a sharp division of moral responsibility between the political sovereign and the individual soldier[3]. The authority to declare war rests solely with the prince, who must bear the moral burden of determining the justice of the cause[14]. The individual soldier, conversely, is primarily responsible for obeying the lawful commands of his sovereign[63].

Augustine argues that even if a soldier is ordered to fight by an ungodly or pagan king, he may perform his military duties in good conscience, provided that the command is not a glaring, obvious violation of divine law[3]. If there is uncertainty or doubt regarding the justice of the campaign, the soldier is morally entitled to presume the righteousness of the command and obey, as the responsibility for any injustice rests solely with the ruler[3].

This division of responsibility laid the conceptual foundation for what would later be termed the "moral equality of combatants"[10]. Augustine's framework implies that combatants on opposing sides of a public conflict can confront each other as moral equals, each executing their civic duties in good faith under the authority of their respective sovereigns[43].

This concept was highly influential for later scholastic theologians and jurists[43]. For example, the

sixteenth-century Spanish jurist Francisco de Vitoria relied heavily on Augustine's *Contra Faustum* to develop the doctrine of "invincible ignorance" (*ignorantia invincibilis*), arguing that soldiers who participate in an objectively unjust war in reliance on public authority are exempt from moral guilt, as they enter into the conflict in good faith[64].

Conversely, modern revisionist theorists, such as Jeff McMahan, have challenged this Augustinian legacy, arguing that the moral permissibility of combatant action must be directly tied to the objective justice of their cause, demonstrating the ongoing, highly contested relevance of Augustine's work in contemporary military ethics[10].

The Eschatological Horizon: Amillennialism, the Saeculum, and the Limits of Sacred Violence

Augustine's formulation of both *bellum iustum* and *bellum Deo auctore* cannot be fully parsed apart from his revolutionary eschatological paradigm shift[65]. In his mature thought, most notably in Book XX of *De Civitate Dei*, Augustine decisively rejected chiliasm—the literal, historicized premillennial expectation of a physical, thousand-year earthly reign of Christ and His saints[66]. In its place, he popularized what would become the dominant eschatological framework of Western Christendom: amillennialism (or realized millennialism)[66].

By interpreting the "millennium" of Revelation 20 symbolically, Augustine argued that the thousand-year reign of Christ is not a future political reality to be established on earth through military conquest or imperial decree, but rather the spiritual reign of the Church in the present age, inaugurated by Christ's resurrection and ascension[66]. This eschatological reorientation carries profound implications for his political theology and his justification of violence, operating along three primary axes:

The Desacralization of the State and the Saeculum

By reframing the millennium as a spiritual reality coexisting with the ongoing historical process, Augustine dismantled the Eusebian, triumphalist eschatology of his contemporaries, who viewed the Constantinian Christianization of the Roman Empire as the fulfillment of biblical prophecy and the physical dawn of the Kingdom of God on earth[9]. For Augustine, human history is not a progressive, upward trajectory toward a golden age of Christian civilization, but a process of historical decay that can only be redeemed from the outside, by a transcendent act of God at the end of time[68].

Consequently, the temporal state—even when governed by a devout Christian sovereign—remains firmly rooted in the *saeculum*, the morally ambiguous, provisional, and transient arena of earthly existence that spans the first and second comings of Christ[35]. Because the state belongs to the *saeculum* and not to the unmediated Kingdom of God, its military campaigns can never be inherently redemptive, salvific, or cosmic in nature[68]. By desacralizing politics, Augustine set a strict limit on the state's ability to wage "holy" wars of imperial expansion or forced conversion in the name of bringing about the eschaton[11].

The Tragic Realism of Bellum Iustum

Because the *saeculum* is characterized by the radical intermingling of the City of God and the

City of Man, the perfect peace of the heavenly Jerusalem remains a strictly eschatological hope, unattainable within history[18]. The best that can be achieved in the present age is the fragile, temporal peace of the earthly city (*pax terrena*), which serves as a vital shelter for the pilgrim church[18]. Waging war to restore this imperfect order is therefore never a holy crusade to build a divine society, but always a tragic, provisional "sad necessity" (*tristis necessitas*) designed to restrain the *libido dominandi* and prevent complete chaos in a fallen world[39]. Augustine's eschatological realism dictates that *bellum iustum* is a coping mechanism for a broken world, completely divorced from any expectation of spiritual or territorial conquest for Christ's kingdom[7].

The Relocation of Bellum Deo Auctore and Pastoral Coercion

Since amillennial eschatology asserts that Christ's kingdom is currently advancing as a spiritual reality in the hearts of the elect and not through physical geopolitical dominance, the category of direct, divinely commanded physical warfare (*bellum Deo auctore*) is historically sealed[10]. Augustine argues that the explicit commands given to the Old Testament patriarchs to wage physical holy wars to cleanse the Promised Land were unique, typological pedagogy belonging to a previous salvation-historical dispensation[13]. In the present church age, physical violence can no longer be used to expand the borders of the Kingdom of God, as the weapons of the Christian pilgrimage are primarily spiritual[13].

However, this amillennial framework also gave rise to Augustine's justification for imperial coercion against heretics[10]. Because the visible Church in the *saeculum* is a *corpus permixtum* (a mixed body of wheat and tares that will coexist until the final judgment), the preservation of institutional and doctrinal unity becomes of paramount importance[9]. While state force cannot be used to conquer outer pagans to establish Christ's kingdom, Augustine reasons that the Christian state, acting in service of the Church, may deploy disciplinary coercion (*persecutio iusta*) against schismatics like the Donatists[10]. This coercion is not a territorial holy war, but an exercise of internal, pastoral discipline designed to bring wayward sheep back into the flock, preparing their hearts to receive the saving truth[26]. In this way, Augustine's amillennialism simultaneously restricted outward physical holy wars while validating inward, corrective state violence to maintain the spiritual integrity of the Church during the historical interim of the *saeculum*[10].

Comparative Matrix of Augustinian Warfare Paradigms

To systematically delineate the conceptual differences between these two modes of justified violence within the Augustinian corpus, the following tables contrast their structural elements, source of authority, and underlying moral characteristics.

Analytical Dimension	Just War (bellum iustum)	Holy War (bellum Deo auctore)
Primary Source of	Legitimate public prince or	Direct command or prompt

Authority	temporal sovereign[14]	of God (*expressa iussione*)[10]
Moral & Theological Justification	Punishing temporal injustice and redressing social injuries[7]	Executing divine judgment to punish human pride and purge spiritual corruption[2]
Role of Human Agency	Righteous sovereign and soldiers lamenting the "sad necessity" of sin[7]	Instruments of absolute, unreflective divine obedience and providential purging[2]
Applicability of Natural Law	Strictly governed by universal constraints of justice and proportionality[5]	Transcends standard human moral limits by direct divine dispensation[9]
Ultimate Intended End	Restoration of earthly, temporal peace (*pax terrena*)[21]	Execution of divine cosmic order and defense of transcendent truth[10]

Characterizing Feature	**Unjust Persecution (persecutio iniusta)**	**Just Persecution (persecutio iusta)**
Principal Agent	Ungodly rulers, heretics, and schismatics[52]	The Church utilizing legitimate state mechanisms[10]
Inward Moral Motivation	Cruelty, hatred, revenge, and the *libido dominandi* [cite: 3, 26, 52, 58]	Ordered love (*caritas*), pastoral discipline, and desire for healing[26]
Outward Behavioral Action	Violating public peace and dividing ecclesiastical unity[10]	Enforcing disciplinary laws to recall heretics from error[8]
Soteriological Purpose	Precipitating souls into error and eternal damnation[52]	Compelling reflecting minds (*cogite intrare*) to accept salvation[8]

Scriptural Archetype	Hagar's insolence toward Sarah; Pharaoh's hard bondage[26]	Sarah's corrective discipline of Hagar; Moses's severe correction[8]

Theoretical Trajectory and Historical Legacy

The synthesis of *bellum iustum* and *bellum Deo auctore* within Augustine's corpus established an incredibly powerful, enduring intellectual framework that shaped the geopolitical and religious landscape of Western Europe for over a millennium[5]. By separating the morality of physical violence from the outward deed and anchoring it in the internal disposition of the heart (*praeparatio cordis*) and the authority of the commanding power, Augustine provided a flexible theological architecture that could be adapted to diverse historical and political demands[13].

In the centuries following the collapse of the Roman Empire, this synthesis was systematically codified and expanded by medieval canonists and theologians[11]. Gratian, in his twelfth-century *Decretum*, integrated Augustine's anti-Donatist writings and the concept of *bellum Deo auctore* to argue that the Church possessed the corporate authority to declare and direct warfare to suppress heresy, punish infidels, and defend the Christian commonwealth[11].

The practical application of this Augustinian legacy is most clearly visible in the evolution of the Crusades[3]. Carl Erdmann, in his classic study on the origin of the crusade idea, argued that the Crusades represented the historical culmination of the Christianization of holy war, wherein the defense of the Church and the recovery of sacred territory were elevated to the status of a spiritually meritorious act[11]. Proponents of the Crusades drew heavily on Augustine's theory of divine command, asserting that because the military campaigns were declared by the Pope—acting as the Vicar of Christ—and directed against the enemies of the faith, they met the requirements of legitimate authority, just cause, and right intention[11].

The concept of *praeparatio cordis* was transformed into a spiritual reward, enabling crusaders to view military participation as a form of penance and a means to acquire perpetual indulgence[34]. The crusading ideology effectively fused the defensive, legalistic constraints of *bellum iustum* with the absolute, transcendent claims of *bellum Deo auctore*, illustrating how Augustine's theoretical framework could be utilized to elevate military violence to a holy, redemptive duty[3].

Indeed, medieval chroniclers such as the anonymous author of the *Gesta principum Polonorum* and Bishop Vincentius of Cracow in his *Chronica Polonorum* explicitly applied Augustine’s three-fold criteria of legitimate authority, right intention, and just cause to depict territorial conquests and the suppression of paganism as a hybrid of just and holy war[79]. In these medieval historical accounts, military action against pagan Pomeranians and Prussians was framed as a manifestation of Christian love aimed at eradicating idolatry, securing frontiers, and offering salvation through prompted baptism[50].

Ultimately, Augustine's dual legacy remains a cornerstone of Western political philosophy and military ethics[13]. The tragic realism of *De Civitate Dei*, characterized by the moral burden of the *tristis necessitas* and the pursuit of *tranquillitas ordinis*, directly anticipated the development of

modern international humanitarian law and the *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* frameworks designed to constrain the horrors of warfare[7].

Yet, the polemical arguments of *Contra Faustum* and his pastoral defense of coercion in the Donatist schism constructed the primary theological and psychological mechanisms used to justify centuries of religious persecution, imperial expansion, and holy wars waged under the banner of divine command[10].

The tension between these two currents—the tragic restraint of the Just War and the absolute zeal of the Holy War—continues to define the ethical and political debates surrounding the use of force in the modern world[17].

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